Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) II

Gender Analysis

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Executive Summary

This report is a critical desk review of USAID's Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE)[1] initiative's gender achievements and challenges within the framework of the initiative's resilience objectives and the context of gender inequalities in Niger and Burkina Faso. The review summarizes current knowledge and identifies programmatic recommendations for RISE implementation. It is derived from RISE core partner reports and other relevant documentation. These were supplemented by academic and grey literature, as well as documents from humanitarian organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working on gender and resilience in the region.

Key Findings:

- This review supports findings from other literature that deep-rooted historical and perpetuating inequalities between men and women, because of institutional norms and structures, make it quite "impossible to build resilience in households and communities without also addressing systemic gender inequality"[2].
- While all women from both countries and all ethnic groups face common challenges, dynamics and/or issues, there are important differences between groups and between Niger and Burkina Faso. These differences have implications for development programming and may impact development results in different ways.
- In the RISE approach to building resilience within communities, the primary units of target are households, which is a fundamental obstacle to the effective targeting of women and the measuring of results in a gender-sensitive way. Using households as the primary units of targets does not account for different power and decision-making relationships, the uneven distribution of household assets, and other internal inequities between males and females living in that household. A male head of household normally has the prerogatives of control and decision making over the benefits of the household.

Key Recommendations

- Conduct context-specific gender assessment(s) for each RISE intervention zone. These should include a range of variables such as the participant's gender, but also aspects such as age, social identity, and the challenges and opportunities that come along with such variables.
- In addition, a gender assessment must precede every action in the project cycle. This will allow programs to articulate and integrate gender appropriately, from budgeting during design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- RISE should clarify that female empowerment is its main approach to gender equality. This will likely pave a way for more female-focused intervention.

[1] RISE was initiated by the United States' Government (USG) in 2012 to enhance the resilience of chronically vulnerable populations in the drought-prone areas of the Sahel, focusing on Niger and Burkina Faso.
[2] Mercy Corps. Rethinking Resilience: Prioritizing Gender Integration.

- Promote the participation of men in female empowerment activities. Female empowerment is not synonymous with male disempowerment. By being and feeling included, some men can prove to be real change champions, as they end up grasping the rationale behind gender equality and female empowerment.
- Identify the gaps in gender equality using sex-disaggregated data that will enable the development of a gender action plan to close those gaps. Be cognizant that inclusion is one initial step toward gender equality; it is not necessarily the result.
- Capture agricultural women's, men's, pastoralist women's and migrants' understanding of vulnerability vis-a-vis land and water resources.
- Be sensitive to gender-based violence that can result from female empowerment activities. Train women, men, and adolescents in successful household negotiations for harmonious household relationships.
- Leverage the implementation of land and pastoral laws to allow women, youths and marginalized populations access to land and other productive resources.
- Emphasize women's poultry and small ruminant production.

Introduction

This report is a critical desk review of USAID's Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) initiative's gender achievements and challenges within the framework of the initiative's resilience objectives and the context of gender inequalities in Niger and Burkina Faso. The review aims to summarize current knowledge and identify programmatic recommendations for RISE implementation. Initiated in 2012, USAID's RISE seeks to address chronic vulnerability in Niger and Burkina Faso by strategically layering, sequencing and coordinating USAID and other humanitarian and resilience-building investments, with the goal to "increase the resilience of chronically vulnerable people, households, communities and systems in targeted agro-pastoral and marginal agriculture livelihood zones in Niger and Burkina Faso." USAID is cognizant of women's and men's acute and uneven challenges and opportunities in development. Consequently, in the second phase of the RISE initiative, the agency urges a departure from a business-as-usual approach to gender equality and female empowerment. The goal of this review is to help guide partners to engage in more gender-transformative approaches that inform design and guide implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Over the past two decades, the Sahel region including Burkina Faso and Niger has experienced a series of high yearly variabilities of rainfalls, droughts, frequent floods, and increasing temperatures, making it difficult for populations to escape the poverty trap. The vulnerability of communities in Burkina Faso and Niger is multidimensional, encompassing poor health and nutrition status, extreme poverty, illiteracy, extended annual lean seasons, indebtedness, gender inequality, degraded natural resources and low agricultural productivity, and governance failures. Recurring stresses and shocks include shared shocks (such as droughts, floods, animal and crop pests and diseases, price and market shocks), household-specific shocks (sickness, death, divorce), and ongoing stressors (such as limited and erratic rainfall, low soil fertility, and rapid population growth) that continuously undermine development gains despite ongoing development assistance.

Burkina Faso and Niger are both characterized by deep-rooted gender inequalities and inequities in social, economic, political, and civic rights. Age and gender are important markers of hierarchy. However, gender carries more weight than age, since a man has authority over a woman even if she is older than him[3]. These inequalities limit women's opportunities to assume decision-making roles in society and income-generating activities in the economy. Both countries rank towards the bottom end of the global Gender Inequality Index (GII)[4]: Burkina Faso ranks 146/157 and Niger ranks 157/157. In Burkina Faso, women's mean years of schooling is 1 versus 2 for their male counterparts, while the mean years of schooling for Niger women is 1.1 versus 2.3 for men. Compared with the 4.9 versus 7.1 mean years of schooling of women and men of Nigeria, a West African country that ranks higher among the low human development countries in the 2016 Human Development Report, Burkina and Niger are lagging behind[5].

[3] SIDA, 2004. A Profile on Gender Relations: Towards Gender Equality in Burkina Faso. http://www.sida.se/contentassets/2a5008bc2f3c4a11ad797d56602745de/towards-gender-equality-in-burkina-faso_422.pdf

[4] Gender Inequality Index (GII) – the ratio of female to male Human Development Index (HDI) – reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity.

[5] According to Human Development Report 2016, the mean years of schooling is the average number of years of education received by people aged 25 and older, converted from educational attainment levels using official durations of each level.

In the RISE Zones of Interventions (ZOIs), women, as well as men, are knowledgeable small-scale farmers and pastoralists who significantly contribute to combating poverty within the household. Women's livelihoods strategies depend hugely on natural resources, including water, forest, livestock, and agriculture, which are highly dependent on climate change[6]. However, gender is often a determinant of the risk a person faces vis-a-vis extreme climate shocks, and by extension, their resilience.

Burkina Faso and Niger are also characterized by contradictory institutional and customary laws regarding gender. With the support of development partners, the governments of Burkina Faso and Niger have placed women and gender equality at the center of their national poverty eradication strategies and ratified regional and international gender equality agreements. Notable progress has been achieved in the domains of education, health, and social protection. However, the disparities remain. This is partly because gender equality strategies have focused on the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of inequities and injustices between men and women in development processes, and partly because in many cases customary practices take precedence over institutional policies. In addition, important gender specificities exist between different social and ethnic groups within each country, further complicating any gender equality strategies.

Methodology

The documents selected for this review derived from USAID's core partners for resilience, comprising existing Food for Peace (FFP) development programs and marginal agricultural livelihood zones in Burkina Faso and Niger, and USAID's Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel Enhanced – Accelerated Growth (REGIS-AG) and Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER). The FFP programs include organizations such as ACDI/VOCA-Burkina Faso, CRS-Burkina Faso, CRS-Niger, Mercy Corps, and Save the Children. This was supplemented with relevant USAID policy and guidance documents, Sahel Resilience Learning (SAREL) and WFP documents, and relevant academic and grey literature. Non-RISE source documents were sourced from various other organizations including Care International, UNICEF, UNFPA, IFAD, Plan International, and ILO to substantiate the analysis. Academic documentation provided additional sociological and anthropological analysis.

This approach provided an overview of the state of gender in the two countries and the way it relates to poverty alleviation and resilience. This report goes beyond highlighting weaknesses to emphasize the opportunities for gender-transformative impacts at all steps of the project cycle, from design to evaluation through implementation and monitoring. This implies developing gender-sensitive project targets and activities in which women and vulnerable demographics have a voice and make decisions.

[6] Senabou Segda. 2015. Note de décryptage sur le genre et le climat.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso ranks 183 out of 188 in the 2016 Human Development Report, with 44.6% of the Burkina population living below the global poverty line of US$1.25 per day. Benefits of production are unequally redistributed, putting women and children at the margin, which exposes them to poverty. This inequality in redistribution has been a major hurdle to female empowerment. Based on the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)[7] developed by the Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), discrimination against women is high in Burkina Faso, with a SIGI value of 0.2819 on a 0 to 1 scale. As a result of more limited time availability and unequal education opportunities, women are less likely to engage in income-generating activities to their full potential. The 2016 HDR presents a gross national income of $1,539 per capita for Burkina Faso, with a bias of $1,800 for men versus $1,278 for women. According to the US State Department, 10% of Burkinabe women ages 20 to 24 were married or in a union before age 15, and 52 percent were married before age 18[8].

In Burkina Faso, gender inequality has pervaded the social, economic and political fabric of life. Despite an increasing trend towards modernization, deep-rooted attachment to customary laws and religious beliefs influence and mostly define men's and women's roles and responsibilities. Such sociocultural burdens maintain structures of domination that perpetuate gender disparities. They restrict women from accessing resources, social services and opportunities, and from participating in decision making spheres.

The Government of Burkina Faso developed a National Gender Policy (PNG) in 2009, which builds on Burkina Faso's Constitution and the Burkina Family Code of 1989 and international and regional laws. The cross-cutting action plan of the PNG seeks to curtail inequalities in poverty, health, education, political participation, as well as other vital sectors. In the last quarter of 2017, the government decided to adopt gender-sensitive budgeting in its programs applicable in 2018. The legal and administrative frameworks governing gender equality at the national level include:

- The Constitution of 1991
- The Family Code (1988)
- The Labor Code
- The Land Law
- The Penal Code
- The National Gender Policy,
- The Rural Development Policy Letter
- The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
- Education for All
- The Ministry of Women and National Solidarity
- Burkina Prospect 2025
- The National Plan for Economic and Social Development

[7] The SIGI was developed based on a set of indicators grouped under 5 sub-indices. These include: discriminatory family code, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted resources and assets, and restricted civil liberties to measure the discrimination against women in social institutions of over 160 countries.
[8] US State Department. 2016. Burkina Faso 2016 human rights report, https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265440.pdf

Gender roles, responsibilities and time used

The social landscape of Burkina Faso is marked by disparities which can be mostly explained by a gendered division of labor. Such social dynamics overload women with daily tasks that are usually executed with little to no advanced technology. Burkinabe women play immense, if not full roles in the maintenance of the household's food, water, and energy. Work performed at home is mostly unaccounted for and unpaid. Women account for 75% of food production and are almost exclusively responsible for food processing.

In Burkina Faso, the social division of labor draws from traditional views of society. Thus, it is unsurprising to observe inequalities between women and men in terms of opportunities for employment and skilled work. Both men and women are prone to rural and urban employment challenges, but women face more challenges securing an employment or funding their own business, partly as a result of lack of access to education, skills, and training. Only 27% women hold non-agricultural employment (World Economic Forum, 2014). In the formal sector, it is common to see women lose positions due to opposition from their spouses or relatives. In the informal sector, women play central roles, although men are making inroads into activities formerly viewed as women's. In addition, household work and unpaid family labor are not highly valued.

Women, especially those living in rural areas, are usually stressed by time shortage, as they work 16 to 18 hours a day. They divide their tight time budget to satisfy multiple competing priorities, including processing family food, caring for children, taking care of the household, supplying family's needs in water, energy, health, labor, etc.

Access to and control over assets and resources

Burkinabe women face significant challenges accessing and controlling assets and means of production, including land, technology, improved equipment, and financial services. Women's low income is partly explained by the fact that they are denied access to productive resources such as land, credit, and property (World Economic Forum, 2014). Additionally, unequal opportunities for accessing capital, paired with exclusion from decision making keeps women's concerns unaddressed, and often thwarts their entrepreneurial and professional ambitions.

Women in Burkina operate at the intersection of the legal framework that provides their rights to land and traditions that deny them this right[9]. Although 90% of Burkinabe women engage in agricultural activities, they have limited access to productive resources, including land. In fact, in the minds of local populations, as well as many civil servants, land matters only concern men[10]. Though women can access some natural resources in rural areas, they do so not as owners of such goods, but as dependents of male counterparts. In addition, 96% of female-headed households engaged in horticulture use hand tools while 21.5% of

[9] Francoise Ki-Zerbo, Georgette Konate, and Souleymane Ouattara. 2006. Securisation des droits fonciers des femmes Rurales au Burkina Faso : A l'Ecoute de la Loi et des coutumes, page 18.
[10] SIDA, 2004. A Profile on Gender Relations: Towards Gender Equality in Burkina Faso. http://www.sida.se/contentassets/2a5008bc2f3c4a11ad797d56602745de/towards-gender-equality-in-burkina-faso_422.pdf

male-headed households are engaged in the same activity use plows[11]. Similarly, improved and time-saving technology for producing and processing food is a luxury that most rural women cannot afford. Conditions for credit are prohibitive to the poorer strata of the population, and women in such strata are doubly excluded because they face more challenges finding collateral. Poor access to clean water constrains women's time, physical energy, and opportunities for agricultural production. In some areas of the country, it is not usually easy for a woman to access water.

Women's decision-making concerning their health and access to health services is also low, and Burkina Faso's health system is characterized by significant gender disparities. Despite women's increased use of health facilities after a recent government effort to provide basic health services to women and children, only 34% of women use health services. Long distances, transportation costs, and needing permission to go to a health center are common barriers to women's use of health services. Sometimes, women cannot even decide by themselves to go to a health center when they are sick because they need approval from their husbands.

Reproductive health of adolescents is characterized by sex at an early age, early and unwanted pregnancies, and induced abortions. For every 100,000 live births, 300 women die from pregnancy related causes. For instance, evidence in the SANOU SOURO National Hospital shows that 37% of maternal deaths are due to illegal and clandestine abortions and more than half are teenagers. Abortion is legal in Burkina Faso under specific conditions, including saving the mother's life, pregnancy contracted under rape and incest, and severe fetal malformation. In Burkina Faso, 26% of women die from diseases or complications related to sexual or reproductive behavior, versus 7% of men[12]. According the World Economic Forum Report (2014), there are 39.1 female HIV age-standardized deaths per 100,000 versus 32.6 male deaths[13] in Burkina. Inequalities between men and women, including the difficulty in negotiating safe sex, are involved in the spread of the pandemic. In Burkina Faso, HIV prevalence was 1.8% in 2008. The rate of infection among girls aged 13 to 24 was 5-8 times higher than boys of the same age group (ECA, 2004). Similarly, data show 69.7 female diabetes age-standardized deaths versus 44.7 male deaths per 100,000.

Burkina Faso's education sector is also prone to acute gender inequalities, at formal and informal levels, as well as within families, where primacy tends to be given to boys. The population with at least secondary education rate is 0.9% of women vs 3.2% of men in the 2015 HDR. In formal education, the increasing trend of girls' enrolment at all levels of the educational system, especially, at the primary level (65% vs 68% for males) does not take into account the hurdles teenage girls and disabled children face for accessing school premises because of inadequate buildings and lack of toilet facilities that protect individual privacy, especially during girls' menstrual periods. Another set of sociocultural and economic factors, including purchase power, food insecurity, distance from schools, and lack of access to transportation, underpin gender inequality in the educational sector

The booming mining sector dominated by artisanal mining in Burkina Faso does not necessarily entail opportunities for women. Mining sites are viewed as masculine spaces, in

[11] Politique Nationale Genre du Burkina Faso, 2009.
[12] Politique National Genre
[13] http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=BFA

which women normally operate as food processors or petty traders. However, many young women on mining sites end up being caught in the traps of sex work. Amidst uncertain agricultural conditions and poverty, men temporarily leave their children and wives to join the sites in search of wealth. The decision to join a mining site bears a series of risks, including a high probability of engaging in casual and unprotected sexual encounters. In the event a man contracts a sexually transmitted disease, his wife is a top potential victim. In addition to this health risk potential, the wives of many mining migrants usually live in a state of uncertainty, not knowing when their husbands will send money or come home. This puts additional burden to women who must maintain the household. In her study on household dynamics among households of Burkinabe migrants who stay behind, Genevieve Cortes (2016) notes that "in the absence of their husband, women grasp opportunities to engage in socio-economic activities"[14] as an alternative to the vulnerability they face. The problem is that in the event of the migrant husband's win in the gold mine, there are chances he will marry an additional wife or look for mistresses; which can be a source of frustration to the wife who stayed behind.

Patterns of power and decision-making

In Burkina Faso, household and community decisions are normally made by men. Though not always expressed, there is a perceived primacy of sons over daughters, and therefore, men over women. The political field is still a male-dominated one in the country. At the political and administrative level, a weak political empowerment of women impedes women-friendly policies and resource allocation. In 2012, 15.3% of seats parliament were occupied by women in parliament. This decreased to 11.81% in 2016, even as the political upheaval that saw intense participation of women gave a false hope for improvement. The electoral code was barely respected as the 30% quota of female candidacy required was not observed by most political parties. Ministerial positions held by women increased from 14% in 2014 to 24% in 2016.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

Ingrained traditional practices include gender-based violence that affects women negatively. These include female genital cutting, domestic violence, imposed polygamy, early marriage, non- or unschooling of girls, etc. Though men can also be victims of gender-based violence and polygamy, women usually bear the brunt of these negative practices. Non-consensual sexual intercourse, rape, pedophilia, and child molestation are also forms of violence that women and girls experience on a regular basis. In addition, sexual exploitation of girls and unwanted engagement in sex work constitute violence exerted on women. Within traditional contexts, women and youths are excluded from decision-making spheres where they are denied a voice, leaving their concerns unaddressed. Exclusion from productive resources is a pernicious yet unaccounted gender-based violence that confines women and children in poverty schemes. Unprotected casual sex increases the risk of contracting

[14] Genevieve Cortes. 2016. Women and Migrations: Those Who Stay. Page 10. http://echogeo.revues.org/14892 .

sexually transmitted diseases or HIV-AIDS. Such practices seem more pronounced among workers of artisanal mines. Gender-based violence causes horrific challenges and psychological pains to women, and there is also the possibility of affected male children repeating the violence in adult life.

Specificities of the Sociocultural Groups Targeted by RISE in Burkina Faso

USAID and its RISE partners based the targeting criteria on national and sub-national levels, agro-pastoralist and marginal agriculture livelihood zones to select the Central-North, the East, and the Sahel Regions of Burkina Faso. These areas coincide with agro-ecological zones, ethno-cultural spaces, and specific farming activities. In Burkina Faso, the Mossi and the Gourmantche are primarily agriculturalists and agro-pastoralists, while the Peulh are usually pastoralists. The overall situation of women and girls within these cultural contexts fits the broader one described above.

Among the targeted groups mostly practicing agriculture and agro-pastoralism in Burkina Faso, women access land through men. They do not inherit land from their families and cannot pass land to their sons or daughters. Rather, all land that a married woman has used throughout her lifetime is the property of her husband – or another male – who will normally bequeath it to his family. For example, among the Gourmantche, a woman cultivates the family field with her husband as soon as they marry. But by the next season she can ask for a small piece of land to grow her own crops. Within this context, the married woman's field is called a koswalga. As the woman grows older, she gets status and faces less time constraints, and can have her farm increased in size. Thiombiano (2014) found in a study that despite the close social organization between Mossi and Gourmantche societies, Gourmantche women had better decision power than their Mossi counterparts[15]. Among the Mossi, men and women are socialized in a spirit of submissiveness to authority, starting at household level. Submissiveness is further expected from women vis-à-vis men.

Married women normally receive a plot of land from their husband or husband's father the year following their marriage. This woman's farm, which is used to farm the woman's personal crop, is called the "beolgo". In the case of a polygamous home, the latest married woman works with her co-wife during the first year. She receives her own plot the second year. There are cases when she receives the farm only after she has her first child. As the married woman grows in age and obtains status, she's given a larger plot that she can use as she pleases, except alienating it. The woman's rights to such a farm are quite strong, except in the case of divorce. Simultaneously, she is responsible for feeding herself exclusively through cultivation of this field, on which she grows staple crops, beans, groundnuts, sesame, and sauce crops[16].

In addition to agricultural activities, livestock plays a central role in the personal economies of Mossi and Gourmantche women in "providing income, creating employment opportunities and providing food and nutrition security across different production systems and along different value chains" (Njuki and Sanginga, 2013:1). In addition to poultry, many

[15] Bilampoa G. Thiombiano. 2014. Genre et prise de decision au Burkina Faso. In Cahiers Quebecois de Demographie, 432 : 249-278.
[16] Kelsey Jones-Casey (201). Women's Access to Land, Markets and Local Institutions in East and Central-North Burkina Faso. FASO Program: AID-FFP-10-00013 Final Report

Mossi and Gourmantche women raise a number of heads of goats and/or sheep, or even cattle. The women usually access small ruminants by investing money derived from their other income-generating activities (including chicken sale) or returns from their participation in savings and lending communities. They mainly engage in sheep rearing that they fatten and sell during religious feasts. Although they can consult their husbands before selling an animal for the sake of household harmony, the women fully own decision on selling and control over returns to the animal's sale.

Peulh women normally have little opportunity to contribute to household food needs. For instance, it is considered inappropriate for a noble woman to engage in the public space. Economic activities could not normally be performed out of the household. However, this is changing due to socioeconomic constraints and demands. Because agriculture is not their primary activity, Peulh women have no farm land[17]. Among the Peulh, a woman who marries in a new family is normally given a cow by her husband's family. This cow, which, is herded among the other cattle of the family is not the property of the woman per se. She is entitled to the milk derived from that cow and the husband's cows, as well as to the milk generated from the descendant of that Mother Cow. She can undertake income generating activities from the milk processing, if there is a surplus from the amount harvested after household's needs. Ideally, the Peulh woman keeps her cows for milk and prestige, not for sale. If she divorces her husband, she leaves the cattle, and can only claim them after the death of the divorced husband. However, enjoying such opportunities grants Peulh women some level of economic autonomy.

Niger

The status of women in Niger is somewhat close to what is described above in Burkina Faso, with situations made more complicated by different social, religious, customary and institutional practices that are especially challenging for women. Niger ranks 187 out of 188 on the Human Development Index, with a value of 0.353. The Gross National Income (GNI) is $889 versus $1537 for Burkina, and it has a Gender Development Index value of 0.732. The GNI for women is $481 versus $1,292 for men. Although 63% of Nigeriens are poor, 3 out of 4 poor people are women.

The Niger Constitution declares equality of sex, as well as equality regardless of social, religious, or ethnic origin. The country has ratified both the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1999, and the Optional Protocol on violence against women in 2004. Since 1998, Niger has had a Ministry of Social Development, Population, Advancement of Women and Protection of Children. The laws and regulations essentially recognize the same rights of access to services and resources to men and women. Some of the laws provide provisional measures, such as positive discrimination to accelerate gender equality, while others include a framework that protects women against a set of violations of their rights. These include female genital mutilation, sexual harassment, rape, slavery, prostitution (Niger PNG, page 19).

[17] Rosalie Ouoba, Mariam Tani, Zeneb Toure. 2003. Analyse Stratégique des enjeux liés au genre au Burkina Faso.

There is a gap between formal ratification and application on the ground. Niger has not been able to develop a Family Code; consecutive drafts have been put on hold following vehement protests from Muslim and religious groups. The Protocol on the African Women's Rights Charter was adopted by the government in 2006, but has never gone through parliament. The absence of an actual judicial order is the main challenge to implementing gender equality in Niger. The minimum legal marriage age is 15 years for women and 18 for men, though there is an effort underway through Young Girl Protection Law to change the legal marriage age. However, in some regions of the country, such as Maradi, women tend to marry slightly earlier at about 14.1 years old (Cooper 1997).

Although Niger has a law which stipulates that customary law is only applicable if it is congruent with the national legal framework and international convention, the country's institutional framework is undermined by a mix of statutory, customary, and religious laws that present significant challenges to gender equality. Basically, three sets of laws coexist in the country, with the effective pre-eminence of customary law and Islamic law over modern law. This coexistence of the three types of laws has limiting effects on the implementation of the principle of equality affirmed in national legislation and ratified international instruments. For instance, the law pertaining to the family and the individual acknowledges the application of customary right or the preferred law type of the people concerned. For example, the customary law provides that inheritance should be transferred to males.

In Niger, 98% of the population is Muslim[18]. Most of the communities of Niger are organized socially around a traditional, patriarchal system, where women normally have little to no voice. Several aspects of family life such as inheritance, marriage, divorce, and child custody and land tenure are largely governed by Islamic religious culture, customary, or Sharia law. Women may be entitled to inherit from their father, mother, husband or children, but their share is usually smaller than men's, with daughters inheriting half of what sons are entitled to. Among the Hausa, who make up more than half of the Nigerien population, if a woman is engaging in economic activities with some degree of success, she acquires some social role and prestige. Economic achievement can grant women some status here, which is not the case in the other socio-ethnic groups. In some communities, including the Zarma and the Hausa, wife seclusion[19] is common. Wife seclusion can be strict, confining wives within the household; it can also be less restrictive. "Secluded wives strike a bargain with their husbands to restrict their mobility in exchange for maintenance and care"[20].

However, some secluded women strategize to generate income through what Polly Hill called "honeycomb" markets (1972)[21]. That is, they take advantage of the law of seclusion that frees them from labor that is normally in the public domain and use their underage daughters – not sons – to perform itinerant sales of various products. "They have founded entire mini-markets administered through their pre-teen children in the streets."[22] The downside here is that the women in such contexts will not encourage sending their

[18] Niger population 2018. http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/niger-population/
[19] This is practice that bans married women (of child-bearing age) from public spaces. Because women in seclusion cannot practice agriculture or income-generating activities (IGAs), they use their under-age daughters to perform such IGAs. This obviously can have implications on the children's school performance.
[20] Ayesha Imam. 1993. If You Won't Do These Things for Me, I Won't Do Seclusion for You': Local and Regional Constructions of Seclusion Ideologies and Practices in Kano, Northern Nigeria. Ph.D. Thesis.
[21] Polly Hill. 1972. Rural Hausa: A village and a setting. London: Cambridge University Press.
[22] Jason Chumley. 1998. Work, agriculture, and the rise of female house seclusion in post-colonial Hausaland. University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects. Page 30. http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/247

daughters to schools; which will open an avenue for early marriage and its impending consequences. On the other hand, secluded women with no children or with children of a younger age do not enjoy such opportunities.

Gender roles, responsibilities and time used

Despite the ethnic diversity in Niger and the difference in belief systems and practices, the perception of men's and women's roles and household relationships is a shared reality. There are also internal inequalities between household members depending on the position they occupy. Women, especially the rural ones, are usually stressed by time shortage, as they work 16 to 18 hours a day, dividing their tight time budget to satisfy multiple competing priorities, that include processing family food, caring for children, taking care of the household, supplying family's needs in water, energy, health, labor, etc. Nigerien women's efforts are underrated in the national economy. In 1990, for instance, the state assessed their participation to the economy to 6.6% versus 81.4% for men's[23].

Access to and control over assets and resources

Women usually access limited surfaces for agricultural production (0.5 hectares). Inherited farm land is mostly reserved to men. The crops farmed include staple such as pearl millet (46% of acreage), sorghum (18%) and cowpea (32%)[24]. Alhassane also notes that "there are other crops that are often grown under rain fed and/or irrigated conditions, such as cassava, sweet potato, rice, maize, wheat and fonio (finger millet). Cultivated area is expanding due to the development of irrigation schemes. Other crops such as cotton, groundnuts, Bambara groundnut and nutgrass are also cultivated in some regions, such as Maradi, Zinder and Dosso. However, unlike other countries, the agricultural systems in Niger are mixed and there is practically no region, where farms are exclusively specialized in one particular crop. In some areas of the country, especially among the Hausa, both men and women can access farm land as property, if they can afford to purchase it. Such plots are usually used to grow cash crops such as sesame, cowpea, and nut-grass. The option of buying land is not available in many other ethnic groups. Regarding access to financial resources, women are disadvantaged compared to men, partly because women face challenges to providing collateral. Although not a written rule, financial institutions tend to grant loans to married women only with their husband's authorization. Women and men are all involved in livestock production, with a male participation of 51% of male heads of household versus 37% female heads of households. However, women's cattle population tends to be more than men's, 51.2 versus 32[25]. Backyard poultry is also a preferred activity of women. With increasing poverty, more and more women are now engaged in selling handicrafts, as a livelihood strategy. Of the 23% of the active population practicing handicrafts, 53% are women.

[23] UNICEF.2006. Quelques chiffres sur la situation des femmes au Niger. http// :www.unicef.org/wcaro/WARO_Niger_Factsheet_Fr_StatusFemmes.pdf

[24] A. Alhassane. Niger: Description of cropping systems, climate, and soils in Niger http://www.yieldgap.org/niger.

[25] NEPAD: African Gender, Climate Change and Agriculture Support Program, Niger Consultation Report. www.nepad.org/download/file/fid/5282

The right to access and use contraception and reproductive health services is granted to women. But it is difficult for many of them to access relevant information. 76.3% of women report in the 2012 DHS that their husbands make decisions regarding their health care. The use of contraceptives is relatively low, with only 11% of women reporting use of a modern contraceptive. Due to a prevalence of iron deficiency, 50% of women are anemic, compared with 25% of men. One possible explanation of the gender imbalance in iron deficiency could be poor diets and poor access to health services. Many women from the lowest economic strata have early and repeated pregnancies, thus increasing the risk of chronic iron deficiency that can also impact their children. In a study by Mo et al (2012:227), it was revealed that "low socio-economic status was found to be significantly associated with increased prevalence of anemia. Pregnant women in the lower socio-economic class, owing to financial constraint or lack of education, cannot afford or do not have access to good health services. They therefore suffer the deleterious effects of poor nutrition, malaria, HIV, chronic infections and worm infestations, all of which are known to lead to the development of anemia in pregnancy[26]". Sexual practices, amplified by the low level of education and information of women (especially in rural areas), and low empowerment related to their sexual health are risk factors for HIV/AIDS. The average age of first birth among women aged 25-49 is 18.6 years (OECD 2014, Niger, page 5).

Illiteracy rate for women is estimated at 88%, compared to 72% for men with very high disparities between rural and urban areas, as less than one in 20 rural women is literate. The net primary school enrollment rate is estimated at 30.3% for girls and 43.4% for boys. At the secondary level, the gap widens with a national literacy rate of 8.6% for girls compared to 13.2% for boys. Only 1% of students in higher education are women[27].

The main source of water is wells, and 60.8% of households use this mode of supply. Water is generally collected by girls and women who travel significant distances to obtain it. They are the main victims of shortage of water[28]. Men are gradually participating in water collection with more and more construction of water pumps. In addition, this improvement in water infrastructure opens opportunities for women to participate in the management of water points.

Access to sanitation is a major challenge. Despite increasing latrine construction in rural areas, open-air defecation is common practice. As women are responsible for family hygiene and well-being, they are directly involved in the management of the environment; which contributes to increased domestic workload. In the Maradi area, it is now common to see women using hygienic urine as a natural fertilizer. This protects the environment while giving them a resource to assure resilience in food security.

Most rural women use firewood as their main source of energy, although gas is more common in urban areas. But constraints, such as the degradation of natural resources and distances to wood collection add stress to women's already limited time. In addition to the overload of work related to the search for wood, its use exposes the woman to risks of injuries, burns and diseases related to fire and smoke.

[26] MO Owolabi, AO Owolabi & DA OlaOlorun (2012). Sociodemographic factors in anaemia in pregnancy in south-western Nigeria, South African Family Practice, 54:3, 222-227, DOI: 10.1080/20786204.2012.10874219.
[27] République du Niger. 2007. Plan National Genre.
[28] Ibid.

Patterns of power and decision-making

In Niger, it is commonly accepted that authority within the household is exercised by the man, "who sets the rules and code of conduct, ensures control and management of family property, makes crucial decisions and provides livelihoods to the household members"[29]. Even where women also support their families financially, they still are not entitled to make decisions. As is the case in Burkina, a mother-in-law wields a high degree of power and authority vis-à-vis her daughter-in-law and can be a factor in the actions and well-being of the latter. In the public sphere, women's participation in administrative, political and decision-making spheres is increasing but remains weak: only 1 woman (out of 83 seats) was in Parliament in 1999 versus 14 women in 2004. There has been an increase in 2016 with 29 women elected to parliament out of a total of 171 seats; a rate of 17%.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

Niger does not have legislation addressing gender-based violence, which is rarely reported. According to the SIGI index Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women, 60% of women believe that a husband/partner is justified in beating his wife/partner under certain circumstances[30]. Rape is a criminal offence that is prosecuted, but there are no data on the prevalence of rape. Compared to Burkina, female genital mutilation is low with 2% of women having undergone the procedure (Demography and Household Survey 2012). But is still much practiced by some ethnic groups, such as the Gourmantché, where 65.9% of women are circumcised, and the Peulh and the Arabs, with 12.8% and 3.4% respectively. The areas most affected are those of Tillabéri. Widows may not receive anything if no surviving child binds them to the deceased husband. Worse, they can be victim of "property grabbing". Niger presents the highest percentage of early marriage in the world, with rates topping 70%.[31] In rural areas of Niger, there are reports that families enter into agreements where girls between 10 and 12 years old join their future husband's family under the guardianship of the mothers-in-law.[32] In addition to being a driver of stunting[33], early marriage results in early pregnancies and related complications including maternal mortality, disability, and fistula. Niger records an abnormally high frequency of fistula. The average age of fistula patients is 13 years and fistula occurs in 58% of cases during the first delivery.

Specificities of the Sociocultural Groups Targeted by RISE in Niger

As is the case in Burkina, in Niger, USAID based their targeting criteria on national and sub-national levels, agro-pastoralist and marginal agriculture livelihood zones to select the

[29] Ibid. Page 10.
[30] http://www.genderindex.org/country/niger/
[31] Africa Human Development Report 2016: Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa. Page 35. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AfHDR_2016_lowres_EN%20%282%29.pdf.
[32] US Department of State (2012) '2012 Country Reports on Human Rights: Niger. http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper
[33] Raj A, Saggurti N, Winter M, et al. The effect of maternal child marriage on morbidity and mortality of children under 5 in India: cross sectional study of a nationally representative sample. *The BMJ*. 2010;340:b4258. doi:10.1136/bmj.b4258.

regions of Tillaberi, Maradi, and Zinder. These areas coincide with agro-ecological as well as ethno-cultural spaces, which fit specific pastoral or agro-pastoral activities. Zarma (Djerma), Hausa, and Peulh – with some Gourmantche in Tillaberi – are the main ethnic groups in Niger. The Zarma and Hausa are mostly agriculturalists, while the Peulh are usually pastoralists. The overall situation of women and girls within these cultural contexts fit the broader one described above, when not more preoccupying.

The Zarma and Hausa mostly inhabit the Tillaberi and Maradi Regions. Of the more than 22 million Nigeriens, 50% are Hausa, and about 20% are Zarma. The farmers from these groups mostly grow millet, cowpea, and groundnut, except the Maradi region, where there is practically no difference in crop choice by gender. Men mostly grow millet and cowpea. Women tend to grow groundnut and cowpea. Among the Zarma, women receive very small amount of land from men, if any. In the Maradi region, women enjoy several modes of access to agricultural land. Besides inheritance, purchase or loans, women also enjoy a traditional mode of access called the Gamana, a customary gift of a small plot of land to a wife from her husband[34]. As land has a high market value in this area, women who have saved through various trade activities can extend their plots by buying additional land without a need to consult their husband. Hausa women have decision-making power on use of the profits from their personal plots, while Zarma women face more constraints in accessing land and productive assets.

Peulh women of Niger generally share the same experiences as Peulh women in Burkina Faso described in section II.1.7. However, the Bororo Peulh, a tiny sub-group, approximately about 10% of the Niger Peulh population, abide by a matriarchal system in which men carry out household and other similar tasks; which allows women to mind their businesses and exert full control over their income and wealth.

As is the case for the Mossi and Gourmantche women of Burkina Faso, livestock plays a central role among the agro-pastoralist Hausa and Zarma of Niger. The livestock includes goats, sheep, and poultry, but some better-off women own cattle. Women of these ethnic groups most commonly acquire animals through gifts, purchase, inheritance, habbanayé[35], and barter. Many Hausa women acquire livestock by using money from their profits. It is also common to see women keep livestock from relatives residing in the city; in return, the two parties share the offspring of those animals. These Nigerien women acquire livestock more easily than land, as there is no gender barrier to owning livestock which are important means for increasing income. "While in the 1990s income from livestock sale was a negligible part of women's total income, at present it contributes a substantial part of women's income and savings. The woman has the liberty to use the proceeds as she wishes" (Djibo and Ibro, 1993: 11). But the manure derived from her livestock belongs to her husband or head of household. Poultry, which are commonly raised by women, are easily sold for cash. Women feed their livestock from the stalks and grass of their husbands' fields, in exchange for providing labor, as she is required to care for the husbands' livestock as well. But both husband and wife purchase animal feed during the dry season. The major

[34] Personal Communication with Almou Mani Aboubakar. PhD Candidate. Niamey, October 1, 2017.
[35] Habbanayé is a traditional practice of solidarity "in which wealthier households loan a few female ruminants (such as cows, sheep, or goats) to a poorer friend or family member who keeps the offspring of the borrowed animals as a way to build their own stock." (Lutheran World Relief. No date. Habbanayé: applying a traditional practice for a more resilient future in the Sahel.)

constraint in livestock production is women's labor load and frequent, infectious and parasitic diseases.

Findings and analysis

The following analysis draws lessons and learning from RISE implementation about empowering women and engaging men. It identifies strategies from the USG and other donors that have proven to be successful. It also highlights some unintended benefits and consequences of RISE programming for gender equity and female empowerment. Then, the analysis makes a series of recommendations for future work.

Learning from RISE implementation about empowering women and engaging men

- RISE's approach to gender equality is through female empowerment. This means that the initiative targets women and girls with the goal of reducing the inequality gap.
- RISE partners increased their organizational capacity to advance and measure gender equality and female empowerment by training staff, disaggregating key performance indicators by sex, and by hiring gender advisors.
- All participating programs have conducted at least one gender analysis and implemented the recommendations. Some of the participating programs even developed their own gender strategy and action plans based on analysis conducted the previous year.
- The household is the unit of focus. There is an assumption that when the household thrives all members thrive. Due to intra-household power dynamics, such an understanding needs to be more nuanced.
- Women's participation in savings and lending groups enabled them to secure income, which they use to support business endeavors and/or household expenses such as preventive health care, food, school fees and other expenses[36].
- All RISE partner programs included impressive numbers of women in most activities. But the numerical inclusion of women does not always imply more gains for women.
- Safe Spaces proved to be an effective behavior change communication medium within participating communities. The inclusion of female adolescents in reproductive health in the Safe Spaces program appears to have changed girls' perceptions about modern contraception and their ideal first pregnancy age. For instance, girls participating in the program voted 19.4 years as the acceptable age for having a first child while their non-Safe Space counterparts indicated 16.2 years as the good age[37]. Despite statistically insignificant evidence, there is qualitative indication that perception changes contribute to preventing girls' early marriage[38]. Maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN) behaviors went beyond focusing on the mothers of young children to exploring ways about how nutrition practices can be supported by involving other household members, such as mothers-in-law and husbands[39].

[36] OXU (2017). FASO Final Evaluation Report
[37] Résilience au Niger : autonomisation et résilience des femmes face aux chocs et aux stress.
[38] "Girl, Uninterrupted : How Dahara built a future by saying no to child marriage". October 2016. https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/niger/girl-uninterrupted-how-dahara-built-future-saying-no-child-marriage
[39] SPRING. (no date). The Father factor: How community video encourages male involvement for better nutrition and hygiene behaviors in Niger.

- As evidenced in the OXU's FASO final evaluation report, including older women and men (religious and customary leaders) in health and nutrition behavior change activities has a strong influence on younger women. The engagement of older women and community leaders helped to create some level of peer pressure so that practices such as exclusive breastfeeding, delivering at the health center, and attending four antenatal consultations are being normalized.
- Food seems to be a motivation for participating in work and health programs. In some communities, FFP food assistance approach has proved to be an effective element in attracting members to fully participate in the creation of community infrastructure and assets. Similarly, food encouraged pregnant and lactating women to attend health centers and receive health education.
- The addition of the WASH component, which added more water points in villages, improved health outcomes and women's stretched time budgets. Less time spent finding water means women have more time for childcare and more flexibility to be more active in their communities[40].
- The SAREL activity is an effective medium to mainstream learning and collaboration between RISE partners' staff. SAREL offered a space for RISE partners to test their gender assumptions and share best practices on gender equality and female empowerment in the RISE ZOIs.
- Recruitment of gender specialists, and gender in value chain assessment, and the development of a gender implementation plan, conducting market/ value chain studies and holding fairs outside of the traditional livestock market structure allows for increased market access and participation by women.
- The availability of qualified gender staff ready to provide gender training to other staff, though not sufficient to achieve gender goals by itself, sends strong messages about the prioritization of gender equality to partners and stakeholders.
- Increasing the number of women in leadership positions within community-based organizations is best achieved using a culturally-appropriate approach.
- Strengthening women's and adolescent girls' self-confidence and improving their phone use through literacy, life skills and nutrition trainings are key to female empowerment.

Challenges

Despite many successes, there are some challenges that should be addressed to enhance the gender results of RISE II. Activities should go beyond targeting commonly known challenges to focus on the unspoken challenges and community dynamics that potentially affect a programs' gender effectiveness. Some of the weaknesses identified include the following:

- Without an agreed-upon gender strategy or a gender implementation plan, with inclusive definitions, and benchmarks gender integration and female empowerment mean different things to different people. It is important to clarify the nuanced understanding of the two inter-related concepts to avoid conflation during implementation. Gender equality must be viewed as a broader concept. It refers to the efforts of creating spaces of equal rights, equal access to resources and opportunities, and equal protection to men, women, girls, and boys based on the

[40] OXU. 2017. FASO Final Evaluation Report.

vulnerability of their social categories. Female empowerment can be understood as an approach to gender equality that targets women and girls specifically, with the aim to give them more access to opportunities to increase their power and voice in decision making and their control over resources – but not to the exclusion of men. A program can choose a female empowerment option to achieving gender equality based on a situational analysis. In this case, since both men and women will participate in the analysis, they will find that the results reflect their views. Thus, the males will likely be open to welcome and support the justification of a female-focus intervention. This nuance could also lead program staff to be alert to include vulnerable males among program participants whenever relevant. Not making this clarification could lead program and project staff to focus on women and girls, with little to no consideration of the hidden categories among them. It could also exclude socially and economically vulnerable men and boys whose inclusion could lead to the attainment of the household resilience and female empowerment goals, as well as the overall RISE gender equality objectives. A second point of concern is that focusing on women and girls runs the risk of fostering negative sentiments that can lead to attempts to hinder female empowerment at household and community levels.

- Household headship is sex-disaggregated in many cases, but it does not tell more about the female head's status. In the social contexts of RISE interventions, it is culturally inappropriate for many women, even widows who head households, to state their household headship. They attribute it to a husband's brother. This is also valid for women whose husbands migrated to urban areas. Therefore, knowing if a woman is a widow, the wife of an emigrated husband, or a divorced woman is important for program staff.
- Though cowpeas, small ruminants, and poultry are good crops for engaging women, some crops of value for women in some areas do not figure in RISE's value chains of interest. For instance, while groundnut is not in the RISE value chain basket in Eastern Burkina, women are involved in groundnuts farming in the Goumantche and Hausa areas. Similarly, little known nutgrass is a very nutritious and lucrative crop for Hausa women of the Maradi Region[41].
- There is an assumption in value chain analyses that once women are integrated in the various value chains they improve their household incomes automatically. That is not the case. For example, selling may not mean selling at a fair price. Women, who usually face mobility challenges, may not be able to access marketplaces. The REGIS-AG gender integration approach does not seem to address this challenge explicitly or effectively.
- It is unclear who takes part in the Gender and Resilience Community of Practice advocated by SAREL. It is unclear if participants are project staff and other specialists or if this network involves core field actors such as farmers and other beneficiaries. Clarity about members' status will indicate how inclusive and necessary it is. If it is not diverse enough to include all stakeholders, there could be a concern about the way they shape field implementation.
- Low female staff coupled with limited gender and social analysis and staff gender training. This was raised in REGIS-ER gender strategy, which also mentioned a lack of uniform gender integration knowledge, practices, and budgeting across all program

[41] CILSS / FEWS NET / OCHA / SWAC / UNICEF / WAMIS-NET / WFP. Joint Mission Report 2005. Food security and cross-border trade in the Kano–Katsina–Maradi. Page 33.

components and among all staff and community-based service providers, as well as lack of youth strategy. These observations can be made about most RISE partners as well.

- Though a RISE partner program, such as FASO, carried out a gender analysis around mid-term, it implemented gender activities with neither a gender strategy nor an action plan. As a result, much of the good gender integration and female empowerment work that the organization has been performing is not known by all and has not been incorporated into larger planning, budgeting, training and evaluation structures.
- RISE partner programs or projects often work in the same geographic zones with overlapping objectives. Yet, they often duplicate research and work on issues of common interest due to lack of coordination or communication, thus duplicating efforts.

Successful strategies from USG and other donors

The Feed the Future gender factsheet, supplemented by gender policy and guidance documents in 2012, has been a remarkable step. There have since been conscious efforts on behalf of USAID grantees and partners to purposefully address gender issues in projects with various levels of success. USAID's Gender Global Learning and Evidence Exchange allowed partners and grantees to relate on their work and their peers' for better gender work. Grantees now move beyond the gender-conscious approach to target gender-transformative objectives. However, there are challenges to translating the policy objectives into reality in the field. USAID requires all staff to complete gender equality and female empowerment training, but it is not clear if programs' or projects' field staff also receive such training. In addition, the level of technicality of the policy and guidance documents may be beyond the lay project staff. There is also a flawed understanding that the program's or project's gender issues are the gender specialist's responsibility. Gender is a cross-cutting objective and should be everybody's responsibility. The World Food Program's West and Central Africa Regional Bureau 2015-2020 Gender Strategy – which includes Burkina Faso and Niger – builds from the broader Corporate Gender Strategy. More importantly, it provides a comprehensive and bottom-up proposition to make gender "everybody's business".

Unintended effects of RISE programming on gender equity and female empowerment

<u>Positive unintended effects</u>

- Besides achieving its intended effect of promoting behavior change to improve maternal and child health, the RISE peer support group approach also had the unintended benefit of contributing to women's leadership in community groups.
- There is no evidence in the review that RISE activities add a burden to women. On the contrary, alternative literature and empirical data show that rural women embrace

multiple activities and will prioritize the most rewarding ones beside vital household priorities[42].

Potentially negative unintended effects

Despite good intentions, RISE runs the risk of causing some of the following unintended consequences in its programming:

- Advocating for women's individual land ownership in sociocultural contexts where it is only common under a number of conditions could complicate or jeopardize current precarious access opportunities, and potentially do harm to women.
- Increasing women's participation in development processes can be a necessary path to empowerment; but it is not sufficient. Promoting women's empowerment requires taking steps beyond numerical and symbolic inclusion to build women's capacity as agents of development and actors with a voice in decision-making.
- Some program and project staff can experience "gender fatigue" if it is not clearly demonstrated that female empowerment improves development results.
- Domestic and gender-based violence can occur where husbands begrudge their wives' economic gains or newly acquired sense of entitlement.
- Focusing on female adolescents and leaving out male ones could send a wrong message that females and males must undertake endeavors separately. Similarly, this can also lead some men and male adolescents to end up believing that female empowerment is synonymous with male disempowerment.
- RISE may end up empowering local customary or land-owning elites and not affecting the lives of vulnerable populations if it continues developing degraded lands without clear contractual terms that gives total control of that land to the program and progressively pass it to the beneficiaries after the core land ownership issue is addressed. In many cases of land development schemes, the tendency is that a good share of a rehabilitated swamp land goes to the landed family. Because it is now common for land-owning families to waive total rights from a land area in exchange of a fee, programs can consider such transactions, because the landowners are unlikely to be the first to make such a proposition. Such a transaction that fully secures the land will also have the benefit of securing land access and optimizing utilization.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, we propose the following recommendations:

Gender Analysis

- Conduct risk assessment for potential gender-based violence. For instance, if a co-wife receives a goat and the other co-wife did not, enquire into the potential risk for unrest in the household. The programs will certainly need to mitigate such risks through a

[42] Batamaka Some. 'Hot Money': Gender and the Politics of Negotiation and Control over Income in West African Smallholder Households, *Africa*, 83.2, 2013, pp. 251-269.

balanced strategy of targeting beneficiaries. Because this is such a sensitive issue, it will primarily require qualitative studies in order to capture in-depth subtleties about the topic.

- Perform a socio-ethnic and geographic analysis of the initiative's regions and communities in order to better understand the demographic groupings by age, sex, marital status (including polygamy and the number of married women per household), ethnicity, geographic origin, and religion.
- Design culturally-relevant, novel, and efficient approaches that provide women with an opportunity to access infrastructure, productive resources, and financial services, in addition to income generation. Conduct context-specific gender assessment(s) for all RISE intervention zones. These should include a range of variables such as the participant's gender, age, class, and the challenges and opportunities that come along with such variables. Ultimately, the assessments should include quantitative and qualitative data that provides insight beyond surface impressions.
- Consider the gendered nature of seasonal calendars. Women's calendars differ from men's, and depending on the season of the year and the time of the day chosen for a given activity, they can be yet more overloaded. Therefore, no "one-size-fits-all" understanding should apply to men's and women's calendars when planning a set of activities targeting both genders.

Gender-Sensitive Targeting and Inclusion of Beneficiaries throughout the Project Cycle

- Depart from the "monogamous" household understanding in targeting. In a polygamous family, households are as many as the number of wives. Each wife and her children should be considered to represent one household with divergent interests vis-a-vis the other wives in the domestic group.
- Guide and equip project (Gender or Behavior Change) staff with the capacity to influence community-based organization and household members so as to achieve women's participation and engagement simultaneously.
- Include women during design stage activities, starting from needs assessment; this will strengthen their involvement throughout the whole project cycle.
- Document the needs, empowerment pathways, and proposed resilience activities of women and youths, and then create enabling environments with stakeholders forward.
- Consider gender equity during project staff recruitment. Just as "women" is not interchangeable with "gender", being a woman does not necessarily mean understanding gender dynamics or technical knowledge.
- Scale-up successes in health, nutrition, and WASH education while keeping focus on women's and youth's health. Involve women in brainstorming what they think is an impactful approach for capacity building and training sessions relevant to RISE II objectives.
- Triangulate the usual quantitative monitoring activities with qualitative ones, to give more meaning and context to what the numbers say.
- During asset or infrastructure building, assign more meaningful roles to women instead of traditional ones, such as collecting stones for rehabilitating degraded spaces.
- Be mindful of the "status factor" in household dynamics by paying special attention to the power relationships between son and mother and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

- Consider wives of migrated men as prone to vulnerability. Though this category of women may receive remittances from their husbands, lack of labor availability could result in them investing further physical labor to their agricultural and other livelihoods activities.

Sex Disaggregation

- Identify the various sub-groups of women (or men) comprising the larger group of women (or men) of the project area to have a clear grasp of their diverse levels of vulnerabilities. "Women" is not a homogeneous group, as there are various categories or segments of women within a group. This is achievable through a mixed-methodology study of a sample of the project population.
- Bear in mind that sex-disaggregated data is more than simply reporting number of males and females. Disaggregation is performed to understand who does what labor, controls what resource, or makes decision within the household.

Harmonizing Understanding of 'Gender" and Implementation of Gender Activities in Programs

- Clarify that female empowerment is RISE's approach to achieving gender equality. Clarifying this gives the initiative a clearer pathway for gender-specific implementation. Women's empowerment does not imply men's exclusion or disempowerment. It merely means that a more targeted and stronger focus is placed on women and girls to close the inequality gap.
- Each program should start with a sound gender analysis that details the levels of vulnerability and opportunities for resilience. The result will support the selection of the women, youths, and the elderly to include in the project. Then, the gender analysis will feed into the development of the program's gender action plan or implementation plan.
- Develop a concise RISE Gender Strategy upon which each program would further build to develop a gender action plan or implementation plan that focuses the program's agro-ecological, geographical, and sociocultural area of focus. The strategy will articulate the ultimate desired change for female beneficiaries (distinguishing among different sub-groups of women – adolescent, elderly, etc. – as needed). The desired outcomes should be ambitious yet realistic and culturally-relevant given the extent of gender inequality in the given context.
- Clarify the nuance between gender equality and female empowerment. This clarification will give initiative actors a common understanding of gender.
- Adjust advocacy and actions to most effectively reflect gender-specific differences, and then tailor strategies that consider such differences in the project.
- Shift from asking a woman's marital status or household headship in both Niger and Burkina. Instead of asking "Who is the head of household?" consider breaking it in two, and ask "Does she lives under her husband's roof at the time?" then ask, "Does her husband live in the house with her at the moment?".
- The gender specialist and behavior change staff should work together using context- and culture-based approaches to influence transformation of gender norms incrementally.
- Capture agricultural women's, men's, pastoralist women's, and migrants' understanding of vulnerability vis-a-vis land and water resources

- Enlist a RISE senior gender specialist who will provide advice and guidance, and coordinate activities of partner programs through their gender advisors.
- Take preventative steps to prevent diseases women contract through fuel use by encouraging clean cook stoves or building their capacities to make such tools using local materials
- Be mindful of the different reality among adolescent girls and boys (age, schooling status, social status).

Access to and Control Over Resources

- Along with municipal authorities, customary leaders, and swamp or pasture land owners, clarify the rules for plot allotment prior to land development. Reports from RISE partner programs in Burkina Faso show that there is a tendency for landowners to claim quasi full control of the land after it is developed. The same situation applies in Niger in the case of pasture land restoration. Clarifying the terms (including financial compensation) when the swamp, degraded, or pasture land is of little value may give the programs full ownership and control, which in turn will allow them to allocate it to those in need. This will more likely guarantee inalienable land or pasture safety to end users (males and females) after the project has left. If such measures are taken and internal rules clarified with the support of local authorities and customary chiefs, beneficiary women and vulnerable groups will not only access land and pasture resources for farming or grazing their livestock, they will own it, and run no risk of losing it to a man or any other person of power. This approach provides social legitimacy in the ownership. Without it, legal recourse may yield counterproductive effects. In these contexts, any such recourse engaged before using the existing local customary mechanisms of conflict resolution runs the risk of losing legitimacy and social support, and subsequently leading to stigmatization of the petitioner. Legal action here must be used as a last resort, and it might not survive under various pressures.
- Make a rule that a plot that is exploited or farmed with less care runs the risk of being impounded and given to new applicants. This condition will likely work more in contexts of dual-usage swamp lands.
- Develop double use of swamp lands. First target them for rice production, but equip them with water and irrigation infrastructure for vegetable gardening during the dry season. This is a good space for enacting the nuance between gender equality and female empowerment.
- Give vulnerable or socially-excluded males the chance to have a plot. Such people are more vulnerable than the wife of the village chief. A sociological study of a village can map out vulnerability to farming or pasture lands based on social identity.
- Give migrants' wives the chance to have a plot. As the wife of a "land borrower", she is subject to a twofold vulnerability
- Decide that the land is exclusively for women and base the explanation of the decision on supporting facts of the women's imbalanced vulnerability. This can be more easily accepted if the swamp land has been owned by the program through the approach suggested above
- Leverage land and pastoral laws to allow women, youths and marginalized people to access land and other productive resources. The solution to women's access to land is contingent on the successful and meaningful implementation of this project. Until then,

promoting of women's individual land ownership can potentially cause unintended effects to women.

Women's Economic Empowerment

- Align the value chains developed with the agricultural and food habits of the regions. People grow what they need and are likely able to sell locally, especially in geographical regions where market access is a major challenge.
- Emphasize women's poultry production. It allows women to climb the livestock ladder by growing from chickens to small ruminants and even cattle. Support women-controlled activities such as chicken and small ruminant rearing in both countries, and sesame, cowpea, and peanut production according to context.
- Support time and labor-saving technologies for women and allow tools to be managed by the community through a women's tool management committee following the community women's agreed upon terms.
- Promotion of dairy production and sorghum and millet flour processing and fortification is also relevant in Niger and among Peulh pastoralists of Burkina Faso.
- Promote marketing outlets for women, especially for processed livestock products (cheese, meat, skins) and poultry in Niger.
- Build and strengthen women's business skills that they will use to advance their income generating activities and access to markets.
- Provide or backup technical and infrastructural support for processing women-controlled dairy products that will increase their economic resilience.
- Include female beneficiaries' proposals for climate smart farming activities that pertain to their local contexts (rehabilitation of degraded lands, livestock, resilience, horticulture, animal fattening, etc.).
- Outsource civil society organizations with experience in gender and behavior change to design and carry out activities. This will constitute a viable point of sustainability because of their local knowledge.

Governance, Leadership, and Harmony

- Train women, men, boys and girls in household negotiations skills. When household members with less power (women and youths) access opportunities, it can create frustrations leading to intra-household conflict and gender-based violence. RISE should integrate culturally-relevant negotiation approaches to guarantee harmony within the household, and do no harm to the most vulnerable ones.
- Strengthen capacity of project staff, field actors, and decision makers as a way of guaranteeing gender-sensitive design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Include men in most beneficiary groups, but put women in group leadership positions. By being and feeling included, some men can be change champions, as they end up grasping the rationale behind gender equality and female empowerment.
- Undertake community conversations that engage men and women; boys and girls. This could be supported by video screening or drama show on relevant topics.
- Support the creation of gender-balanced governance bodies for the projects, and equip groups with functional governance bodies to avoid mismanagement.

- Use more private spaces to secure young adolescents' privacy during reproductive health mentorship, and strengthen the training of reproductive health mentors and Lead Mothers.
- In mentorship programs such as Safe Space, support adolescent girls with quarterly stipend (beyond food). Include male adolescents in such programs. They are reliable behavior change agents and partners.
- Compensate volunteer work (such as Lead Mothers, Safe Space Mentors) with a nominal fee or any other way that fits or values them within their social context.
- Institute a junior mentorship system that will consist for girls in a mentorship program to coach new adolescents under the overall mentorship of the normal Mentor. At the end of each school year, an assessment of the number of new adolescent girls who joined the group through the junior mentor and stayed in school will receive a distinction of some sort.
- Create a "Safe Space Graduate" recognition to distinguish adolescent girls who remain in school until they are 18 or above. One concrete benefit of the award would be to provide the graduates with enhanced skills to now mentor others, social rules allow.

Recommendations for Baseline or Monitoring Stage

- Capture the subtleties of potential non-monetary benefits that women gain through the intervention and include it in the monitoring framework for future assessment. This includes qualitatively assessing female participants' motivation for joining a program that is not monetary (social capital, social respectability, etc.).
- Include women from all categories in monitoring and evaluation.
- Document the land tenure and/or natural resource management systems of each intervention zone.
- Collect baseline data on household goods and wealth for all participants, as well as the activities they are engaged in. Then, contrast baseline data with the same participants at project mid-term or end to assess progress out of poverty.
- Allocate resources and expertise for implementing the gender action plans.
- Document household members' understanding and preference of "collective household goods" versus "individual household members' goods".
- Include beneficiaries in defining program objectives and resilience outcomes.
- Collect women's views about how to better include them in programs. This could enhance strategies to better include or target female-headed households.
- Identify the gaps in gender equality using sex-disaggregated data that will enable development of a gender action plan to close those gaps. But be cognizant that inclusion is one initial step toward gender equality, not the result.
- Monitor the results of implementation, and holding individuals and programs accountable for outcomes that promote gender equality.

Program Integration

- Gender assessment must precede every action in the project cycle. This will allow programs to articulate and integrate gender appropriately, from budgeting during design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion

Despite the commonalities between and among the countries and populations targeted in RISE interventions, the diversity within and among them is striking in many ways. Often, customary laws outweigh national legal frameworks, which are weakly enforced. Women's restricted access to productive resources, such as land and inputs, is a cross-cutting factor within countries and ethnic groups. In each group, women are left with fewer opportunities depending on the weight of tradition or religion. Though women from some groups such as the Hausa and the Peulh can make decisions over their income generating activities and profits, women from the other groups might need the consent of their husband to make such decisions. On the other hand, pastoralist populations, rural migrants, and potentially vulnerable minorities also face challenges to accessing land. Each RISE II intervention zone has its own gender specificity and will need an approach based on the particular context of that zone. While promoting female empowerment in its approach to engendering gender equality, RISE II will need to view gender more consciously as a set of social categories with vulnerabilities. The proposed recommendations will not solve the deeply entrenched gender inequalities in the RISE II ZOIs, but they provide pathways toward more inclusive development programming in the Sahel.

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